

Accomack – Northampton PDC

Introduction to PDC Area

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District comprises the counties of Accomack and Northampton, and the towns of Accomac, Belle Haven, Bloxom, Cape Charles, Cheriton, Chincoteague, Eastville, Exmore, Hallwood, Keller, Melfa, Nassawadox, Onancock, Onley, Painter, Parksley, Saxis, Tangier and Wachapreague. This region is rich in natural resources and potential for recreational opportunities. The whole region provides vast incubating and feeding grounds for bird and sea life as well as vital resources for fish and wildlife far beyond the borders of Virginia. The Eastern Shore contains a significant percentage of the state's saltwater shores, including most of the state's Atlantic Ocean coastline. This unspoiled coastline along with wide expanses of marshlands, shallow bays and winding channels are guarded by a chain of barrier islands located on the seaward side of the peninsula. It is the variety and quantity of natural and cultural resources that establishes the Eastern Shore of Virginia as an important eco-tourism destination.

Geographic characteristics

Virginia's Eastern shore is the narrow, 70-mile long, southern portion of the Delmarva Peninsula separating the Atlantic Ocean from the Chesapeake Bay. On the Seaside (Atlantic coastline) there are quaint villages surrounded by rich farmland, pristine salt marshes and shallow bays abundant with marine life. Beyond these shallow bays lie Virginia's barrier islands that are almost totally in conservation ownership. These islands form a chain that protects the seaside's tidal creeks, bays, marshes and the mainland. The Chesapeake Bay side of Virginia's Eastern Shore is characterized by islands, inlets, creeks and marshlands with sandy beaches located along the southern end of the peninsula. This geographic region of Virginia would likely be affected most by climate change and sea level rise over time due to the width of the peninsula and the many tributaries that lead into the mainland from both the Seaside and the Chesapeake Bay. Any significant change over time will effect not only the natural resources, but also outdoor recreation and eco-tourism.

Demographics

Less than 1% of Virginia's population resides on the Eastern Shore. Close to 12 percent of the jobs in the region are natural resource dependent. Many involve agriculture, forestry, fisheries and eco-tourism. The estimated 2005 population for the region is 52,400 people up from 51,398 in the 2000 Census. The area is expected to grow at an 8% rate and in 2020 will have approximately 56,700 persons. There is a Northampton County's estimated 2005 population is 13,200 while Accomack has approximately three times that number of persons. By 2020 Accomack County is expected to have three-fourths the population of Virginia's Eastern Shore population with 44,500 persons. While Northampton County's population is anticipated to decrease by approximately 1,000 persons. Already, almost all the population on Virginia's Eastern Shore is located in Accomack County which grew faster than the state as a whole during the 1990's due to in-migration. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District works with each locality to

develop comprehensive plans that include the protection of open space and outdoor recreation resources, while accommodating development.

Demand/survey findings

Recent studies also have identified significant facility needs for close-to-home types of activities. The most pressing needs are for trails for walking, jogging and bicycling. Also active recreation fields for soccer, football, baseball, softball fields as well as volleyball and basketball courts. Also, with growing trends in eco-tourism, additional nature study and environmental education facilities should be considered throughout the region to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Local priorities on the Eastern Shore should include the development of a number of small community parks and at least two district parks, providing game fields and courts, picnic sites, swimming and trails. Certain immediate recreational needs may be satisfied by further developing existing park facilities. Earlier outdoor recreation studies identified a need for passive recreational areas (parks, trails, picnic areas etc.), as well as increased bay and ocean access. These studies and follow-up efforts resulted in the acquisition of Kiptopeke State Park which is located between the community of Cape Charles and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. In addition, these studies identified the Cape Charles area for open space acquisition. The Cape Charles WMA has been acquired as well as the Magathy Bay Natural Area Preserve. These lands conserve important resources and offer opportunities to link the southernmost portion of the Eastern Shore with Kiptopeke State Park.

Outdoor Recreation

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The Eastern Shore Tourism Commission maintains a comprehensive list of outdoor recreation opportunities at <http://www.esvatourism.org/home.asp>.

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The following are general recommendations for meeting outdoor recreation needs in the region.

- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.

- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* Skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.
- Communities and land managers should put forth a united front against crime, by partnering with local law enforcement.

Land Conservation

Since the Eastern Shore Land Trust began in 2003, 4,200 acres in Northampton and Accomack counties have been preserved. Due to the efforts of non-profit and private organizations, nearly all of the barrier islands of Virginia have been acquired and are being conserved in perpetuity. In addition to their conservation value, some of these islands offer opportunities for recreation. Three of these barrier islands are managed by federal agencies and one island is maintained as a state natural area preserve. Two marshland areas on the Bayside are managed by the state: one for wildlife management and hunting, the other as a protected natural area. The state also owns extensive wetlands between the mainland and barrier islands on the Seaside for wildlife management. Kiptopeke State Park is located on the southern end of the Northampton County, and is being developed to provide recreation opportunities and management of unique habitats. Recent additions to the southern tip of the shore include the Cape Charles WMA and the Magothy Bay Natural Area Preserve.

The land conservation maps for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms (See Chapter III. Land Conservation).

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Land Trusts Operating on Virginia's Eastern Shore

Chesapeake Bay Foundation,
Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust
APVA Preservation Virginia
Land Trust of Virginia
The 500-Year Forest Foundation
Virginia Outdoors Foundation

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General recommendation for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

Specific recommendations for land conservation on Virginia's Eastern Shore include:

1. Continue **conservation efforts** with the Nature Conservancy and DCR on the seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore for migratory bird habitat.

Green Infrastructure

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV. Green Infrastructure.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning and rezoning.
- Regional and local governments should adopt an implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.

- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and obtained.

Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

A new trail boardwalk and overlook on the seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore offers a unique inside view of coastal maritime forest and a spectacular vista of seaside marsh along Brockenberry Bay. The 370' boardwalk and 12' x 16' overlook provide public access to the 45 acre maritime forest. The trail and boardwalk are located off highway 636 near Eastville and Cheriton adjacent to the county landfill.

General recommendations for trails include:

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.

- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

Specific recommendations for trails and greenways on the Eastern Shore include:

2. The Central Accomack Bicycle Loop will connect between the Towns of Onley, Accomac, Onancock along with connections to Nandua High School and Nandua Middle School.

3. Develop a trail connection between Kiptopeke State Park and Cape Charles Wildlife Management Area.

Blueways & Water Access (Boating, Beaches & Swimming, Pier and Bank Fishing, Natural Area, Blueways)

Although there is abundant water and open space in the Eastern Shore Region, access is limited. For example, many of the beach areas are either privately owned or difficult to reach, as is the case with the barrier island beaches. The Seaside Water Trail provide access to much of these Seaside barrier areas via 20 public access points, mapping and directions for safe travels around the islands in canoes and kayaks.

The Seaside Internet Mapping System, developed by the Virginia Coastal Program Office serves as the foundation for long-term restoration and management strategies for seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore. The internet mapping includes the Seaside Water Trail, major seaside public access locations, barrier island ownership and access, forest change, shorebird concentration, colonial water bird survey, oyster restoration sites, seagrass restoration sites and phragmites coverage.

Beach Access Recommendations

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.

- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Water Trail

The Seaside Canoe/Kayak Water Trail provides a trail map and guide developed by Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission and Virginia Coastal Management Program. The guide outlines 100 miles of paddling routes in the barrier island system. Thirty-two paddling routes have been mapped between Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge in Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island in Northampton County. The water trail map and web site identifies appropriate public access locations and cultural resources and amenities near these locations; expected paddling time and level of difficulty for each of the routes. Emergency and safety information and an overview of the barrier island visitation rules and regulations as well as information on wildlife and conservation practices along the trail.

As a part of the Seaside Water Trail, the Towns of Chincoteague and Wachapreague installed 6 canoe/kayak floating docks with Virginia Coastal Program funding. Additional docks are planned for Oyster and Willis Wharf.

General water trail recommendations include:

- Encourage water trail improvements and linkages with recreational, cultural and natural resource destination resources.
- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.
- Areas that have adequate access and recreational seasonal flow levels should become numbered recommendations.

Water Access Recommendations

- Old ferry crossings/landing sites and bridges should be considered for opportunities for water access.

- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Specific water access recommendations include:

4. Additional **docks** are planned for **Oyster** and **Willis Wharf**.
5. Localities should look for opportunities to develop more **public access for kayaking and canoeing** both Bayside and Seaside.

Historic and Landscape Resources

The historic character and cultural landscapes of the Eastern Shore make it a primary attraction for tourists. The Eastern Shore Tourism Commission promotes a small town sojourn featuring the many small towns on the shore and links their viability together in a tourist package.

General recommendations for historic and landscape resources include:

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

Scenic Resources

General recommendations to support scenic resources include:

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII.

General recommendations to support scenic highways/Virginia Byways include:

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

The following roads should be considered for inclusion as Virginia Byway.

- 6. US Route 13** from Virginia Beach across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to Cape Charles.
- 7. State Route 184** in Northampton County.
- 8. State Route 182** in Accomac County.
- 9. State Route 178** in Accomac County.
- 10. State Route 13** in Accomac County.
- 11. State Route 659** in Accomac County.
- 12. State Route 679** in Accomac County.

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In [this PDC] there are currently no designated scenic river segments. In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

General recommendations for the region's potential scenic rivers include:

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.
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The following river segments should be evaluated to determine suitability as a Virginia Scenic River.

- 13. Onancock Creek** (entire tributary)
- 14. Occohannock Creek** (entire tributary)
- 15. Machipongo Creek** (entire tributary)

Watershed Resources

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District is divided into two watershed, the Bayside Eastern Shore and the Seaside Eastern Shore. The Bayside Eastern Shore watershed drains directly into the Chesapeake Bay and the Seaside Eastern Shore drains into the Atlantic Ocean.

General watershed recommendation

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

General recommendations for environmental and land stewardship education include:

- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.
- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

Federal Facilities

Outside the NPS and USFWS lands, the Eastern Shore is home to Wallops Station NASA. The Wallops launch range includes six launch pads, three blockhouses for launch control and assembly buildings that support the preparation and launching of suborbital and orbital launch systems. While the site does not offer opportunities for conservation or outdoor recreation, the educational outreach program for visitors and the community is well developed.

National Parks

General recommendations for National Park service facilities include:

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- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program on the Bayside of the Eastern Shore to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.

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Assateague Island National Seashore

<http://www.nps.gov/asis/>

Mike Hill, Superintendent, (410) 641-1443

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National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries Recommendations

The USFWS will coordinate and implement the following recommendations with regard to outdoor recreation and the NWRs.

Specific recommendations for Accomack-Northampton PDC follow:

- Continue to work closely with National Park Service and private partners to optimize compatible recreational opportunities at Chincoteague NWR and Assateague Island National Seashore while protecting sensitive beach habitat.

State Facilities

State Parks

Kiptopeke State Park (540 acres) is located in Northampton County. The park offers recreational access to the Chesapeake Bay and the chance to explore a unique coastal habitat featuring a major flyway for migratory birds. Recreational opportunities include swimming, camping, picnicking, hiking pier fishing, boat ramp, bird banding station, and hawk observatory. The 2002 GOB provided funds for the construction of 5 6-bedroom lodges. The master plan also identifies the need for additional cabins, a visitor center and an overnight environmental education facility. The parks proximity to the USFWS Eastern Share National Wildlife Refuge creates opportunities for collaborative programming and research.

State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for activities other than hunting and fishing.

(Specific recommendations for WMA not available at this time)

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

- Continue promotion of saltwater recreational fishing opportunities in the Commonwealth through continued construction of new reef sites, and augmentation of existing artificial fishing reef sites.

Natural Areas (needs to be updated)

The following natural area preserves are located within the district: **Parkers Marsh** in Accomack County and **Cape Charles Coastal Habitat, Savage Neck Dunes, William B. Trower Bayshore**, and **Wreck Island** in Northampton County.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of March 2001, documented 449 occurrences of 104 rare species and natural communities in the Accomack-Northern Planning District. Five species are globally rare and three are federally threatened or endangered. Ninety conservation sites have been identified in the district; only 32 (36%) have received any level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations.

DCR recommends that the 58 unprotected conservation sites be targeted for future protection efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state natural area preserve. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see the Natural Areas subsection of Chapter IX.

Wreck Island Natural Area Preserve in Northampton County is owned by DCR for the natural heritage resources occurring there. Provision of appropriate public access to the island should be considered.

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Specific transportation recommendations for the Accomac Northampton PDC include:

16. Implement the **Eastern Shore of Virginia Bicycle Plan** adopted by Accomac and Northampton Counties in 2004.

17. Town of Chicoteague Bicycle Plan adopted October 6, 1997

Local & Regional Parks & Recreation

Both Accomack and Northampton counties are served by a parks and recreation department. The towns of Belle Haven, Bloxom, Cape Charles, Cheriton, Chincoteague, Eastville, Exmore, Hallwood, Keller, Melfa, Nassawadox, Onancock, Onley, Painter, Parksley, Saxis, Tangier and Wachapreague do not have their own department, but are served by the counties parks and recreation department. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Accomack, \$13.86 and Northampton, \$15.72. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

General recommendations for local parks and recreation departments include:

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative

management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.

- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores.
http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks

Specific recommendations for local and regional parks include:

18. Site identification, master planning and development of small **community parks** to serve residents as well as at least two **district parks**, providing game fields and courts, picnic sites, swimming, trails, nature study and environmental education.

Private Sector

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2000 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within the George Washington region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access.

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation,

especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.

- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.